

NEWTON I. STEERS, JR.  
8TH DISTRICT  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT  
WILLIAM GRIGG



CW 36A

COMMITTEES:  
BANKING, FINANCE AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
ECONOMIC STABILIZATION  
GENERAL OVERSIGHT AND  
REORGANIZATION  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE, INVESTMENT  
AND MONETARY POLICY  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
REGIONAL AFFAIRS  
JUDICIARY

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
June 30, 1978

His Excellency Jorge Videla  
President of Argentina  
Office of the President  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dear President Videla,

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release (☐) Excise (☐) Deny

Exemption(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Declassify: (☐) In Part (☐) In Full

(☐) Classify as \_\_\_\_\_ (☐) Extend as \_\_\_\_\_ (☐) Downgrade to \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Declassify on \_\_\_\_\_ Reason \_\_\_\_\_

We write to you with a profound sense of concern regarding a tragic situation suggesting the need for immediate investigation and resolution by the Argentine Government. The extensive evidence of the arbitrary detention of Mrs. Nelida Azucena di Forti with her five children, and her subsequent disappearance, so strongly implicates official security forces that a satisfactory official accounting must be made. Her anguished relatives, who can establish nothing about her fate, have exhausted all legal remedies.

May we call your attention to the details of her disappearance. On February 18, 1977, Mrs. Forti and five of her children, ages 8-16, boarded Aerolineas Argentinas flight 284 to Venezuela, to join her husband, Alfredo Forti, a well-known surgeon, who had accepted a contract with the Venezuelan Government to work in a state hospital. (Neither Dr. nor Mrs. Forti have been involved in illegal political activity of any kind, nor was their documentation inadequate.) In full view of passengers, crew, and pilot, a uniformed officer and two immigration officers boarded the plane and ordered the disembarkation of the Forti family. In the presence of the Argentine Federal Police, the Forti family was placed in waiting cars by security agents and taken out of the airport through numerous checkpoints operated by persons clearly familiar with the persons detaining the Forti family. All, including the youngest child of eight, were blindfolded and bound, before being taken to a military establishment, where they remained for six days without explanation. At the end of the six days, the children were again bound and hooded and, separated from their mother, were abandoned in the middle of the night on a Buenos Aires street corner. Security officers informed the children that their mother would be released after solving a documentation problem.

With the help of a representative of a Catholic relief organization, the children were reunited with their father in Venezuela. A year later, the family's efforts to locate Mrs. Forti have yielded no results.

ANY REPLY TO THIS LETTER  
SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO  
OFFICE CHECKED.

☐ WASHINGTON OFFICE,  
ROOM 510  
CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
TELEPHONE (202) 223-5341

☐ ROOM 413  
WHEATON PLAZA, NORTH  
BUILDING  
UNIVERSITY BLVD. AND  
VEIRS MILL RD.  
WHEATON, MARYLAND 20902  
TELEPHONE (301) 427-7548

☐ 6601 RIVER RD.  
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20034  
TELEPHONE (301) 320-3820

His Excellency Jorge Videla

page two

June 30, 1978


The facts surrounding the situation make it clear that Mrs. Forti was not the victim of an unofficial abduction by a paramilitary vigilante squad as has been claimed in other instances of disappearance, but rather that she was the target of a premeditated arrest by military and police officials who were well-known to the airport's extensive security apparatus, and who have since disavowed knowledge of the incident.

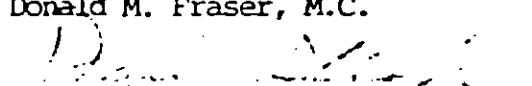
We urge that you rigorously investigate the events leading to the disappearance of Mrs. Forti, who has evidently fallen victim to those who abuse their official power, in violation of the basic rights enshrined in the Argentine Constitution. We draw your attention to the comments of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS, in the 1976 Annual Report, where they noted:

"There have already been many cases recorded of 'missing persons,' that is, persons who according to witnesses and other evidence have been detained by military or police authorities but whose detention is denied and whose location is unknown...The growing number of cases of this kind in several American countries is a reason for serious concern to the Commission and is, properly, one of the aspects of the situation in the area of human rights that has warranted very special attention by the Commission as well as the governmental and nongovernmental bodies which function in this area in one way or other...

The status of 'missing' seems to be a comfortable expedient to avoid application of the legal provisions established for the defense of personal freedom, physical security, dignity and human life itself. In practice this procedure nullifies the legal standards established in recent years in some countries to avoid illegal detentions and the use of physical and psychological duress against persons detained..."

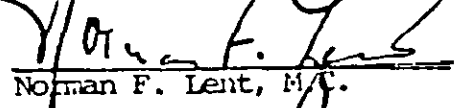
We respectfully await the results of an inquiry into Mrs. Forti's fate.

  
Donald M. Fraser, M.C.

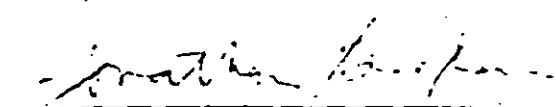
  
Dan Glickman, M.C.

Respectfully and sincerely,

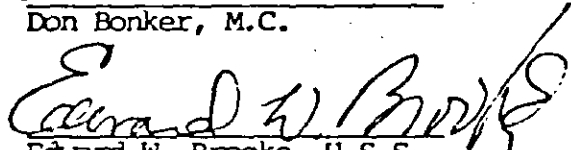
  
Newton I. Steers, Jr., M.C.

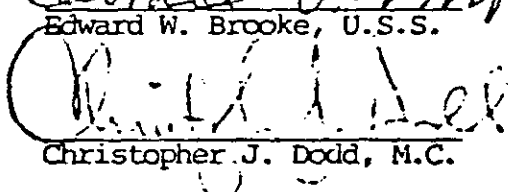
  
Norman F. Lent, M.C.


His Excellency Jorge Videla  
page three  
June 30, 1978

  
Jonathan B. Bingham, M.C.

  
Don Bonker, M.C.

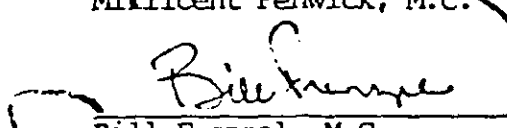
  
Edward W. Brooke, U.S.S.

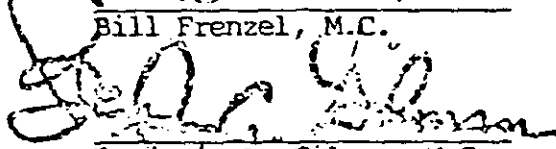
  
Christopher J. Dodd, M.C.

  
Don Edwards, M.C.

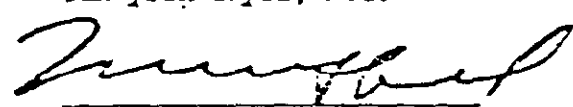
  
Joshua Eilberg, M.C.

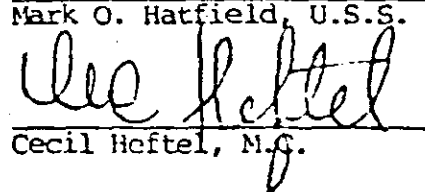
  
Millicent Ferwick, M.C.

  
Bill Frenzel, M.C.

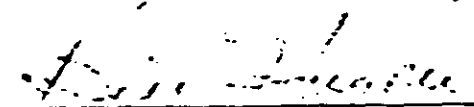
  
Benjamin A. Gilman, M.C.

  
Tennyson Guyer, M.C.

  
Mark O. Hatfield, U.S.S.

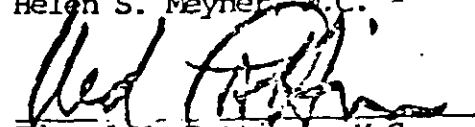
  
Cecil Heftel, M.C.

  
Elizabeth Holtzman, M.C.

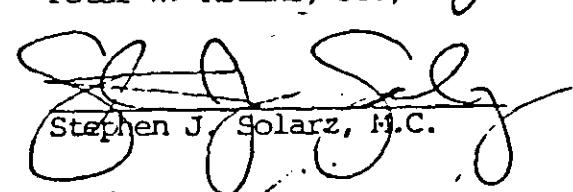
  
William J. Hughes, M.C.

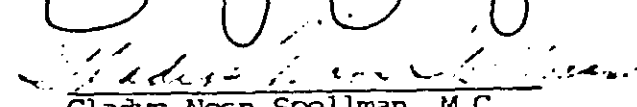
  
John Krebs, M.C.

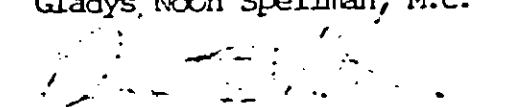
  
Helen S. Meyner, M.C.

  
Edward W. Pattison, M.C.

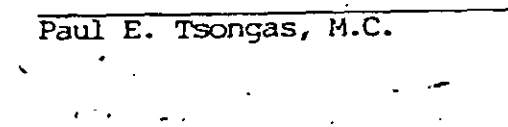
  
Peter W. Rodino, Jr., M.C.

  
Stephen J. Solarz, M.C.


  
Gladys Noon Spellman, M.C.

  
Dave Stockman, M.C.

  
Paul E. Tsongas, M.C.

  
Bruce F. Vento, M.C.

His Excellency Jorge Videla  
page four  
June 30., 1978

  
Henry A. Waxman, M.C.

  
Theodore S. Weiss, M.C.

  
Antonio Borja von Pat, M.C.